

Dear Friends

Pope Francis and I have something in common. Well, maybe two things. I suppose the first thing is that we are both ministers. True, his job is a lot harder, he's been at it longer, and he speaks several languages more than I do. So, true, we are not equals as ministers. But what we have in common this week is that both of us presided at Easter Communion before an essentially empty sanctuary.

That's not what communion is supposed to be. The word derives from the Latin word for 'fellowship'. In communion we are literally meant to be *with others*. Yet St. Peter's Square was as empty on Easter as Charleswood United Church. But we each found a way, we were still in communion, we were in fellowship, we were *with others* in our respective observance.

This moment is calling upon us to be something different. And being something different can be a tremendous challenge. But it is a worthy one. I read a great story in the paper this weekend about Canada Goose. Normally Canada Goose makes luxury parkas but social distancing recommendations made them initially close down all their manufacturing plants including three in Winnipeg. Last Thursday it announced that all their Canadian plants were to re-open. But now instead of parkas they will be making 1.5 million medical gowns in a worker-safe environment.

Earlier I had heard that some local craft breweries were making hand sanitizer. Days for Girls volunteers, the church supported charity, has committed to making hundreds of face masks for inner city community ministries. These are all wonderful examples of creativity and imagination being among the tools that will defeat the virus and bring an end to this pandemic.

And there is something familiar about it. David was trained to be a shepherd. Standing before Goliath he became aware that he could also be a warrior, and later a king. Moses was trained to be a prince but God showed him how he could be a prophet. Paul was well educated on how to be a Pharisee until God changed his vision and he saw himself as an apostle. Even the wise men were told to "go home by another way."

Naturally we think there are limits on what we can do and what we can be. But those are our limits. Not God's. God only expands our thinking, only opens our eyes, only increases our capacity to be agents of love and compassion. This difficult moment is revealing more of who we are and what we can do. Imagination can be the path to transformation. Indeed, it must be.

We were something before. Now we are becoming something else! Thanks be to God.

Grace and peace,
Michael